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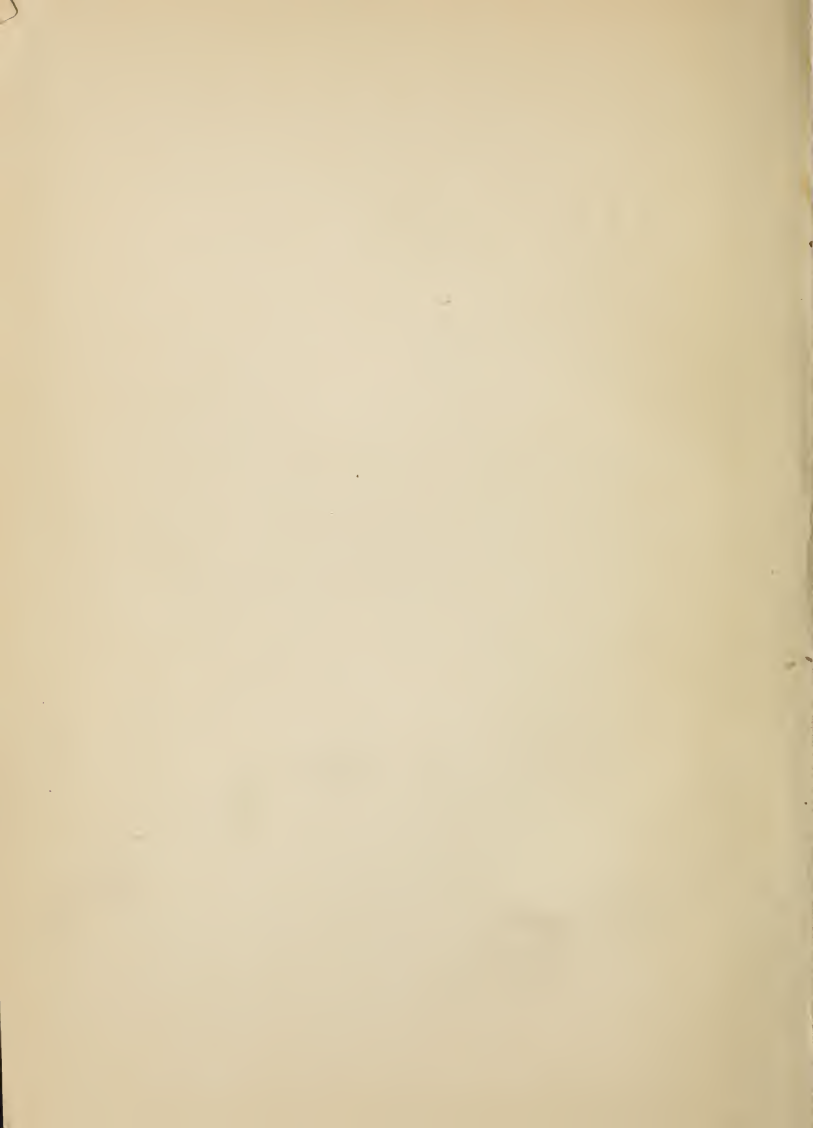
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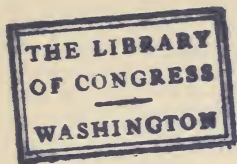
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Frederic A. Minckley

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To

My Daughter,

who made Earth-life beautiful,

and has suffused with light

the way to the

Silent Land.



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Voices out of the Silence.

VOICES OUT OF THE SILENCE.*

It has always been my custom, dear friends, to write, and to speak, out of my own deepest experiences. If any word of mine has ever touched or strengthened or comforted a human heart, it has been because it dealt with some joy or sorrow, some inspiration or some discipline which my own heart had known. Rarely, perhaps, have those who listened to me realized the fact, but I have come to feel that the Sunday hour, in which a little company of people listen to my voice, is consecrated to laying bare in their presence the innermost thoughts and longings of a life.

Shall I change my habit now? Because you will identify the process at every step, shall I suppress the spirit, and speak only surface thoughts to fill the hour, now? I cannot do it.

* The author's first discourse after the sudden death of his daughter.

If to me the opportunities of this place *have* been consecrated ones, you may be sure they are infinitely more consecrated in this time of supreme grief and of holy joy.

Voices out of the Silence! Out of the Silence! The *Silence!* Ah me! with what significance that word falls upon the sorrowing heart! Awful and eternal Silence,—that in the last analysis is the reality of realities. The budding leaves, the unfolding flowers, the singing birds, are children of the Silence. The deepest thought is of the Silence; the deepest love is of the Silence. Birth is a doorway out of the Silence: death is a doorway into the Silence. The sweetest messages the heart has ever known have come to it floating upon the wings of Silence. In hours of greatest ecstasy and in hours of greatest affliction, we stand on the borders of the Silent Land, welcoming, oh! so gladly the coming; striving, oh! so wistfully and longingly, to follow the dear departing guest. Solemn, awful, majestic, eternal Silence, since it breaks our hearts, and crushes our hopes, and takes the sunshine from out our lives. Kind, winsome, divine Silence, since it is sooner or later the home of all that makes life precious and beautiful and fair.

“Into the Silent Land!

Ah, who shall lead us thither?

Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand.

Who leads us with a gentle hand

Thither, oh, thither,

Into the Silent Land?

“Into the Silent Land!

To you, ye boundless regions

Of all perfection! Tender morning visions

Of beauteous souls! The future's pledge and band!

Who in life's duties sweet doth stand,

Shall bear hope's tender blossoms

Into the Silent Land!

“O Land! O Land!

For all the broken-hearted

The mildest herald by our fate allotted

Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand

To lead us with a gentle hand

To the land of the dear departed,

Into the Silent Land.”

No hand material is discernible as we gaze longingly into those misty deeps, no dear familiar voice articulate falls like music on our ears as we stand listening at those heavenly portals; but there are spiritual hands which beckon, there are *soul* messages which come in ways as quick as thought and as sure as love.

Inarticulate Voices out of the Silence,—what do they say to us who so miss their familiar tones, and the enrapturing inspiration of their earth-life song?

First, in order of time, they speak, do they not, of the mystery of life. Not of the mystery of death, as an isolated fact, but of the mystery of life, and of death as a part of life. How it is that the baby comes “out of the everywhere into the here” we do not know. How it is that the baby grows from more to more, through the winsome ways of childhood, through the innocent charms of pure maidenhood and guileless youthhood, to the even greater charms of budding womanhood and manhood, we do not know. Why it is that some die young, and others live to a good old age, we do not know. Why it is that often those go whom the world seems most to need we do not know. The great plan is too deep, too broad, too high, too far-reaching for our finite comprehension.

“A marvel seems the universe;
A miracle, our life and death;
A mystery which I cannot pierce,
Around, above, beneath.”

A mystery,—how the rivulets find their way,

how the stars through pathless spaces ride, how mind responds to mind, and heart to heart, how both seem to participate in the ever-beginning and never-ending work of creation. The more one knows of it, the more one thinks of it, the more one is touched in the holy of holies of his life by it, the more does he bow his very soul in reverence and awe, the more does he become impressed with the greatness of that meaning which he does not comprehend. Struggle, suffering, martyrdom,—these say to him, “Be still, and know that I am God.” In vain men may talk of law,—whence came law? In vain preach of cause and effect,—whence the decree which marries cause and effect? No world of conflicting powers this. At the last it is

“One God, one law, one element,
And one far off, divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.”

From that immortal unity come all things, to that immortal unity tend all things, in that immortal unity live all things. How, in the infinite, that which to the finite seems discord becomes concord, that which seems cruelty becomes kindness, that which seems antagonism be-

comes harmony, we do not know: it is a part of the impenetrable mystery. And the reverent soul can only say, when the tenderest chords are snapped, in language which the thought of a German poet suggests: Dear heart, thou cam'st with gentle step; thou hast gone, leaving the gentle impress of thy footprints upon Earth-land; from whence, and whither? We know only *out* of God's hand, *into* God's hand. The same power which gave has taken. The same power which has always presided over our lives and the lives of all who are near and dear to us presides over them still. Our life dream has been disturbed, a shadow has fallen upon our hearts; but it is the same universe which showed us the vision and flooded us with the sunshine. The questions why it is as it is, how it is as it is, we answer with Carlyle, "Sense knows not, faith knows not, only that it is through mystery to mystery, *from* God and *to* God."

But what is the nature of the power under which all this life of joy and of sorrow, of purest happiness and of most direful suffering, is ordered? Never, dear friends, did the thought of the Eternal Goodness seem to me such a Rock of Ages as now. When one has held in the arms

of his love a nature which was the light, when one has seen heaven in an inexpressibly dear face, when one has experienced the high and growing companionship of a fresh, beautiful, unfolding religious soul, he has learned something of that Goodness. It is inconceivable to him that the power out of whose ordering has come so much can be other than as good as that which it has created. It is inconceivable to him that so much which touched in life and touched in death all the better feelings of our natures could be at the mercy of wild, material forces; that the thoughts and loves and aspirations of the years could be obliterated by the baleful issues of a fleeting second. The very grief that must have way is the spirit's own and all-sufficient vindicator. The inspiration of an unsullied memory is the spirit's own and all-sufficient vindicator. The budding promises crowding thick upon each other are the spirit's own and all-sufficient vindicators. Not for us to picture in detail the life we cannot see, not for us to penetrate the depths of unfathomable being; but, oh, the future must be very good just because the past has been so good, the future must be very full of fruition just because the past has been so

full of promise. Is it possible to conceive of a more complete demonstration of wisdom and of love than that which comes to us in a dear, pure, sweet, and holy life? And shall we doubt the wisdom and the love which have once been so manifested to us? Speculation may assert itself in our hours of leisure; but what magic power has the heart in the crucial moments of life to drive all doubt away!

“No chamber of pain but has some hidden door
That promises release;
No solitude so drear but yields its store
Of thought and inward peace.

“No night so wild but brings the constant sun
With love and power untold;
No time so dark but through its woof there run
Some blessed threads of gold.

“O Light Divine! we need no fuller test
That all is ordered well.
We know enough to trust that all is best
Where love and wisdom dwell.”

Come, sacred memories! come, fond hopes!
come, heavenly inspirations of goodness we
have known and *still* know! teach us to trust, as
little children, in the goodness we cannot see;

teach us to subordinate more and more the heart pangs to the heart exultations, the ineffaceable grief to the eternal joy. In more subtle ways than we have ever known, still let the sunshine stream in; still let us feel that around us all is beauty, that above us all is blue.

But, if the Silence speaks of the eternal mystery and the Eternal Goodness, it has also another voice which I cannot fail to hear. It speaks of the essential spirituality of life, of the indestructibility of character. The last time I stood in this place I said in words which were soon to be emphasized to me with a weight of which I could not have dreamed:—“As the years roll by with seemingly increasing speed, as the dear ones of the heart vanish in increasing procession from mortal vision, do we not look a little more to the heavenly and a little less to the earthly treasures? It seems so to me. It seems as if every grave which has opened for some beloved comrade, some honored citizen, some trusted counsellor, some dear one who once centred all of life and love tenderly in us, or some dear one in whom we have centred life and love, has a voice saying, Look in, look on, look up. The greatest things in all the world

are not houses and lands and the products which we buy and sell: the greatest things in all the world are the imponderable things,—the thoughts, the sympathies, the loves. These know no space, no time. These bind us in invisible chains to each other here: they bind us in invisible chains to each other there.” With what force these words come back to me now!

The form so dear to us, the color of the cheek, the serene, penetrating depth of the eye,—these derive all their dear preciousness, though perhaps we do not always fully realize it,—these derive all their dear preciousness from that which they contain and express. “Millions of *spiritual* beings walk the earth,” —beings who at their best carry about them an atmosphere freighted with divine sympathies and longings. “We read of one such, He was a man of sorrows, and *acquainted with grief*,” and the ages give way to a sense of inexpressible nearness. In hours of gloom, messages of love, such as indicate the sense of a share in our sorrow, come to us, and somehow finite and infinite arms seem about us. And most of all, as we slowly, very, very slowly regain possession of ourselves, the presence which at first we thought all gone seems to

hover over us, seems to whisper in our ears, and to put its arms, in the old way, about our neck. In the holy hush, the intellect stands still, and the heart in undisputed sway says, always and forever one. The love is still ours, the inspiration is still ours, because these were and are of those heavenly treasures which no accident of time can touch. There is not a precious thought, there is not a heart-pang, concerning a true and beautiful life, which does not say, amid the wreck of matter, The real I still lives and still loves. It is what is excellent which makes the heart of the dear one a shrine to which we come as if in worship; and every noble quality which seems to succumb to death repeats anew the eternal anthem,—

“What is excellent,
As God lives, is permanent.”

Thou art not gone, being gone. Having been, thou still must be. Whatsoever of good has passed from out thy life to bless us, and make our lives more rich and fair, shall still come and abide with us, a sanctifying influence, if only we keep our natures open to its touch.

Ah! this suggests that over every new-made grave there is another voice trying to make

itself heard,—a gentle, loving but firm voice summoning to the days and the duties to come. It does not say to me, Grief is weakness, a broken heart is a shame; it does not say to me, Separation is the inevitable, the end has come, shut the door upon the past, and begin all over again: it says, Consecrate thyself anew to high and noble causes, do what thou canst with thy little powers in the service of truth and of mankind, but do it as in an ever-near spiritual presence closer to thee than thy thought, and moulding as never before the innermost impulses of thy life. Oh! there are times when we need the voice of the prophet, there are times when the stern brow and the firm muscle seem to indicate the coming of the hour and the man; but more persistent, more heavenly, is the still small voice and the quiet, all-pervasive influence of a serene and harmonious character. Cultivate that; see to it that death tightens rather than loosens the cords that bind thee to that; live as in the constant influence and blessing of that; and all the new duties as they come, and the old duties as they return, shall be more worthily performed. Thy judgments shall be mellowed, thy aims broadened, thy motives clarified. An invisible pres-

ence shall go before thee, beckoning thee in the ways of the spirit to the higher life.

How often, in times past, as some beautiful sunset view has touched my being, as the inspiration of the mountains or the sea has filled my soul, or the wondrous sublimity of the stars at night has inspired within me the mood of reverence and awe, have I exclaimed, This is a beautiful world! It — is — a — beautiful — world,— not alone because of its inanimate charms, but because of the beautiful minds and hearts and souls which walk its ways to bless it. It will always seem *more* beautiful for the noble and guileless son: it will always seem *more* beautiful for the sweet and loving daughter. Hard, inexpressibly hard to bear is the great desolation which is upon us; but out of the Silence, through the mystery, we can sense the Eternal Goodness, we can realize the spiritual reality, we can be strengthened and purified for the coming duty. Time after time the old pangs will return, month after month and year after year we shall go on in great sadness of heart; but some new good will be born to us, some gentler nature will come to us. Beauty *will* rise from the ashes, roses *will* blossom from among the thorns.

"Since she died, to me is one thing sure,
There must be an eternity;
For over my cleft heart
Feel I an Eternal Life sweeping,
Since she died.

"Since she died, a strong wall
Of loneliness surrounds me;
Fruitless the invasion
Of joy flows in upon me,
Since she died.

"Since she died, profoundest calm
Sinks deep into my heart;
The soul closes the eyes,
And divines and dreams more than it thinks,
Since she died."

Eternal Goodness within the mystery; immortal beauty everywhere,—I will try to dream of these the more reverently and tenderly, since they have touched my soul in a life so beautiful and true.

They had
All Things Common.

THEY HAD ALL THINGS COMMON.

WHAT a wonderful and suggestive picture that is of Peter standing before the multitude and summoning them to repent and be baptized! So much are they moved by his appeal they sell their possessions, give to every man as he has need, and have all things common. I say it is a wonderful and suggestive picture. Wonderful, because of its illustration of the power of spiritual truth to make men one in unselfish devotion to universal needs; suggestive, because of the thought to which it almost inevitably leads—that not only in matters of free choice men *may*, but in matters of destiny men *do*, have all things common.

The realization of this truth grows with the cultivation of the tendency to seek points of agreement rather than points of difference, and it receives new emphasis with every deep expe-

rience which comes to the individual or to humanity. Take, for example, the idea of the unity of the race from the most superficial point of view,—the physical structure and characteristics. The time was when, noting differences, men made the color of the skin or the nature of the hair determining factors. In our own country the system of chattel slavery rested on the assumption that a black skin was the indication of an inferiority so great as to justify the treatment of those possessing it as a different order of beings from those possessed of a white skin. To such an extent was this thought carried that people in the non-slave-holding States, who had any trace of the condemned color in their complexion, were liable to be arrested and sent into slavery. Well, that was the superficial, the literally skin-deep view. With the growth of scientific methods and the removal of social bias by a great moral awakening, our eyes were opened to some more fundamental facts. It was discovered that the negro had an osseous structure centring about a vertebral column, very much like a white man; that he had a muscular and veinous and nervous system, very much like a white man; that he had stomach, heart, lungs,

very much like a white man; that, while the facial angle might vary, the quality of the hair vary, the color of the skin vary, from more or less external causes, these vital factors of erect position, of digestion, respiration, locomotion, were constant. And with this discovery were set free those influences which have utterly undermined the old conceptions of race, and taught what a unity there is within all the variety of form and complexion and speech. So that now it is not too much to say that, physically speaking, humanity, though diversified in non-essentials, in essentials have all things common. This is the outcome of scientific study of man as a purely physical being,—a common origin, a common nature, a common destiny.

Look now, for a moment, at the unity of humanity in the universe of mind. At first men noticed the differences in the thought-products of peoples. They forgot that any thought-product, however small, presupposed the power to think; that any thought-product, however great, only presupposed the same power to think; that the difference was one of degree rather than of kind, easily due to differences of environment rather than to differences of nature. But every

discovery of thought in a poor, hunted slave, every discovery of thought in a despised class or race, every discovery of thought in primitive and barbaric men, has driven the lesson home with a significance not to be mistaken. The essential thing is to have the ability to think and to formulate thought. In these respects most ancient Aryan and most modern Yankee have all things common. German differs from French, and both from English: all differ from Chinese, and Chinese from sister tongues; but language is at last one, the power to formulate thought in speech is one. So we say, and say truly, the great minds of the world belong not, as has been held, to a race: they belong to humanity. In externals they are special, but in internals and essentials they are universal. It would be a thankless task to try to demonstrate that the man who wrote,—

“Earth’s insufficiency here grows to event,
The indescribable here it is done,
The eternal womanly leadeth us on,”

is less mine because his was not the tongue that Shakspeare spake, or that the man who wrote

“The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes,"

is not the German's benefactor, because his was not the tongue which Goethe spake. The minds which receive the truth and transmit its light to men are brother minds. Hindu hermit-saint, Parsee devotee, Chinese sage, Judean carpenter's son, Arab prophet, belong to the same company: they are all ours, and they belong to all men. Mind everywhere inherits the achievements of mind everywhere; and, mentally as well as physically, we have—the children of men all round the globe have—all things common.

And, if all this is true of the universe of physical and mental life, what shall be said of the universe of heart and feeling? Nothing, I suppose, is more common, and in some respects more natural, than for people to feel that they have a monopoly of the affectional nature, or at least have it in larger and more pre-eminent degree than others have it. Especially have men been accustomed to think of certain classes as stony-hearted and of other classes as too degraded in the scale of civilization to be susceptible to the finer touches of feeling. How can it be possible that there is anything common

between the love which draws poets together and that which draws the toiling millions together? How can it be possible that there is anything in common between the love which, having summoned a little life out of the everywhere, watches tenderly over it in its budding and blossoming, and gives all it possesses and all it is to make it true and beautiful and good, and the love which reluctantly accepts and reluctantly trains and reluctantly serves in smallest degree its offspring? "It is only a poor sort of happiness," says Romola to Tito's boy, Lillo, "that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves." How can it be possible that there can be anything common between a love thus expressed and that which seeketh its own and knoweth only its own satisfactions? And so we paint our companion pictures, fancy they stand for antagonistic realities,—on the one hand looking upward to the light of heaven, on the other hand looking downward to the darkness of the pit. But experience in time opens our eyes, and we learn

the superficiality of our own judgments. We learn that the human heart may be infinitely tender under a covering of rags; we learn that the Scrooges have their sensitive spots, sure to respond when rightly appealed to; we learn how easy it is for a little girl to find her way to the heart of the roughest man. There are awkward men and there are polished men, there are men of silence and men eloquent in words; but when love-light touches the eyes, and the thrill of responsive sympathy moves the muscles of face and hand, it may be much the same thing in the one as in the other. All genuine feeling is eloquent, all sincere sympathy has a divine gentility which shames our cheap veneer of superficial manners. The godlike flame which holds supreme sway in the presence of the object of affection will never appear to us *less* godlike as we find some portion of it was never wanting in any human heart, and learn that it is the divinity within us leading us up and on. There was something in common between the engineer who, as his engine sped along in the darkness of the night, made it whistle to his wife in the distant cottage, "I love thee," and the poet who, in the quiet of his study, wrote in rhythmic beauty,

“Not as all other women are
Is she who to my soul is dear.”

The Brownings and Burns certainly had great differences both as to theme and style, but all three sang of love in such ways as to win our hearts. Love is the god to whose shrine sooner or later all are drawn in a varied but common worship.

Not less do we have things common in the moral realm. It is hardly necessary to say that in some of us the moral impulse is stronger than in others; but few will claim, to-day, that there is any such intrinsic difference of moral nature between those who get *into* jail and those who keep *out* of jail, as was once supposed. It used to be the thought that society, through government as its organized representative, possessed the right and had imposed upon it the duty of punishing men for crime. The highest civilization has entirely discarded that notion now, assuming only such power over the criminal as is protective to the community and educational to him. Whence this change of view and of practice? First and chiefly in the dawning perception that no man is wholly and unqualifiedly good and no man is totally depraved. All men

are brothers means that all men have much in common, and that sentiment stirs within us somewhat of the fellow-feeling which makes wondrous kind. How easy it is to select some weak spot of our own, to think of some temptation against which we are a little vulnerable, and to see how it might have been with us, had our inherited tendencies and our educational surroundings been less favorable! How easy it is to predict the future of two babies, one born of love, the other of passion, one surrounded with an atmosphere of heaven, the other with an atmosphere of hell! With our short-sighted vision we think we see a terrible gulf yawning between what we call virtue and vice. But to the eye of Infinite Justice, seeing the innermost motives of man and how those motives have eternity for their opportunity, there can be no such differences in the children who have been made members of one great family and had implanted in them mutual love. Surely, there are sins to be hated; but it does not follow that those who yield to them in little or great degree are to be hated, too. If so, there are few of us who would not have cause to hate ourselves as well as our neighbors. The more humane and the more divine view dis-

tinguishes between the sinner and the sin, and feels with Portia the sublimity of mercy. A common sense of moral danger, a common recognition of a common tendency to yield at some point where we ought to be strong,—this it is which has recalled and is recalling humanity from its harsh and barbarous theories, and has pressed home to its innermost consciousness the conviction that Jesus and Judas are one. And here, again, we do not lose, we gain, in the meaning and the sublimity of life. That in me which responds to the appeal of truth, that in me which is moved by the touch of feeling, that in me which is nerved by the summons of conscience, is not so small that it can be monopolized by one little man or by fifty millions of little men. It is the magnificent incarnation of the Infinite and Universal which holds planets and suns in unconscious obedience, and endows man, wherever found, with necessitated freedom. It has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of social science that one portion of the world cannot get very far ahead of any other portion, so closely do we march to destiny abreast. And it is certainly a beautiful and uplifting and refining thought that highest and lowest, strongest and weakest, are

linked together by one common, silken chain, which may sometimes give, but can never break. Come up higher! is the divine call to every human being. In answer to it, all classes and conditions gather in like aspirations for a better life, such as travel through prison walls as easily as over the counters of trade, and rise as naturally from filth and rags as from the carpeted aisles of cathedrals dim, and, behold! in moral discernment and endeavor they have all things common.

Finally, it has been discovered that what we call the spiritual nature and what we call spiritual experiences men have in common. It was not always so. Indeed, in the ascending series of common ties this is the last to be recognized. The physical resemblances are apparent to the external senses; mental likenesses are seen with greater or less clearness in the early processes of mind; the outgoings of the affections soon hint to us the oneness of human heart experience; and the common struggles in the realm of morals begin and continue in every conscious stage of development. But the conviction that all men have spiritual experiences in common comes as something more than a theory,—only when we have had some revelation of the neces-

sity of a spiritual philosophy to account for the universe of which we are denizens and of the life we are called upon to live in it. At the risk of seeming personal, I feel it to be at once a sacred privilege and duty to bear my testimony on this point; and I do so the more freely because I know that I shall be speaking for others as well as for myself. I cannot tell how many poems, which I have always loved, have come of late to have for me a deepened tenderness, because I see in them now the expression of a heart sorrow so like my own. I cannot tell what a revelation it has been to me that thoughts which I had often cherished, and certainly sometimes expressed,—when flowing from my pen as the irrepressible outpouring of a broken heart, touched, perchance, by a degree of finer sensibility than it had before known,—have fitted directly into the experience of so many others, and enabled me, as the mouthpiece of a sainted life, to convey so much of its spiritual sunshine in the hour of their anguish to other souls.

You and I think sometimes, dear friends, that tragedy has stalked into our homes and hearts as it never did before into any home or heart, and never can do again. It is not so; and it

does not make our grief less deep or sacred than it would otherwise be because it is not so. There is a certain divinizing influence for us, a certain consecrating influence for us, in the fellowship of sorrow; and the world will always feel a little more respectfully and reverently toward any one of whom it can say, "He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." No! deepest disappointment, hardest separation, most untold agony, sooner or later come to all. And out of the sympathy of the common lot grows much of the resignation, the subdued and chastened sweetness, which lead us to the feet of the inevitable in holy confidence and trust; a confidence and trust not less holy because in the silence many souls are struggling to attain unto it. And the faith that somehow, in ways we cannot see and understand, this external life is not all of it; that what "God so blest once cannot so prove accurst"; that we are not the victims, but in the end the masters, of material forces; that "life is just a stuff to try the soul's strength on"; and that that soul is at home in this universe not less when beyond than when within our ken, truth still its aim, beauty still its atmosphere, goodness still the law of its being,

this faith,—how it is strengthened, how it is broadened, how it is deepened, by the reflection that it has a foothold in every human soul, and is expressive of the natural yearning of every human heart !

They had all things common. We have all things common,—all the most essential, all the most enduring, all the most divine things. Not our houses and lands, but the beauty with which they blossom and bear fruit. Not our wearing apparel, but the way in which that ministers to its noblest uses. Not wealth and the commodities of various kinds which wealth procures and includes, but weal with all the conditions that favor it and all the opportunities it brings. The best things cannot be monopolized. The best things are not diminished by spending. In the realm of thought, in the realm of love, in the realm of spiritual and moral aspiration,—yes, even in the realm of physical development,—we give to have. As the old lines run,—

“Hand in hand with angels,—
Blessed so to be;
Helped are all the helpers,—
Giving light, they see.”

The sunshine belongs to us all ; the clear, blue sky belongs to us all ; the stars belong to us all.

And just so the sunshine of the pure, warm heart, the clear blue of a heavenly character, the bright shining star of a beautiful life,—these belong to all who come within the reach of their influence.

“One harvest from thy field,” writes Emerson,

“One harvest from thy field
Homeward brought the oxen strong;
A second crop thine acres yield,
Which I gather in a song.”

And that second crop, gathered from the great field of the universe in the perpetual and worshipful singing of the poetic heart, is the real crop which no oxen are strong enough to draw, and nothing less than the homes of universal humanity great enough to cover. How small it makes all our disposition to grasp at mere material things, and our attempts to get ahead of each other in the pursuit of material things, seem, when we realize that the things which moth and rust cannot corrupt, and which thieves breaking through cannot steal, are shared in common, and are even more plenteous because of the sharing.

How infinitely gentle and considerate of each other this thought of common inheritance and common experience in all that renders life most

precious and inspiring ought to make us! How much of the disposition to quarrel it ought to quell in us; how it ought to temper every harsh word and every harsh thought; how it ought to discourage suspicion and jealousy and doubt; how it ought to warm men with loving sympathy, and weld them into brothers! It is in the fire of deep individual, social, and national experience that men become most aware of the unity which links them together. How blessed the thought that it is the most superficial experiences which tend to divide, and the most internal experiences which tend to unite!

“The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another's need;
Not what we give, but what we share,
For the gift without the giver is bare.
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me.”

We have all things common. Whoso through heart-pang or heart-ecstasy, whoso under the cloud or in the sunshine, whoso at the gate of life we call birth or at the gate of life we call death, has his eyes opened to this truth, has found the Holy Grail. It is in his character, touched with a diviner comprehension and toned to a diviner calm.

Spiritual Awakening.

SPIRITUAL AWAKENING.

I WANT to take for my text, friends, to-day, Robert Browning's great poem, "Saul." The Hebrew king is forsaken of the Lord. Things are going wrong with him. He is troubled in mind and despondent in mood. As they used to say, he is possessed of an evil spirit. David, whose fame is well known, has been sent for, to come with the wonderful music of his harp, that he may try its power of restoration. In anxious expectancy, the attendants await his arrival.

"At last thou art come," says one of them to the harpist, as he greets him with reverent affection, and tells him how for a space of three days not a sound hath escaped from Saul, to indicate that his strife with the evil spirit has ended. Then David kneels in prayer, rises to his feet,

runs to the tent, prays once more, and enters, calling to the king, "Here is David, thy servant." No voice replies; and he gropes about in the darkness until a sunbeam bursting through the tent-roof shows Saul "drear and stark, blind and dumb" in his agony. Then David tunes his harp, and plays the various melodies through which his soul is accustomed to find its channel of expression,—first the tune all the sheep know at folding-time, then that which tempts the quail to leave his mate, then what stirs the crickets and what calms the jerboa, then the wine-song of the reapers, then the funeral song, then the glad chant of the marriage, then the great march of the temple-building, and then the chorus as the Levites go up to the altar in glory. Here Saul groans; and the player stops, holds his breath, and listens. The king's head moves; and David, encouraged, sings to him of our manhood's prime vigor, of the goodness of mere living, of the joy of the physical life, of the mission Saul had received from his father, of the last testimony of his mother that all was for best, of his brothers and friends of his boyhood, his boyhood of wonder and hope; then of how he has become the head of a great people, —

“High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature,—King Saul!”

Then as he ceases, having painted to the king the record of his own life, David in the fulness of his mood cries aloud, “Saul!” and waits the thing that shall follow. A long shudder thrills the tent, and the king stands before David restored. And now what shall the singer do to *sustain* him whom his song has restored? He takes again his harp, and sings of the spiritual life; how Saul’s deeds shall live after him; how the marble and the pen shall tell of what generations yet unborn owe to the mighty king. As he ends his song, his harp falling forward, he becomes aware that his head is resting just above Saul’s knee; that Saul’s hand is laid

“Soft and grave, but in mild settled will,”

on his brow; that Saul bends back his head

“With kind power,—

All his face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.”

And looking up reverently, with heart melted in love for him, he says to the king,—

“Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and
this :
I would give thee new life altogether,— as good, ages
hence,
As this moment,— had love but the warrant love’s heart
to dispense !”

And with this reflection the truth flashes upon David’s consciousness. Would I do all this from love, would I sacrifice comfort, happiness, life itself, I whose knowledge shrivels at wisdom laid bare, I whose forethought seems as nothing to the Infinite Care ; and will not God’s love order the best for its creature ?

“Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him who yet alone can ?”

Would it have entered my mind to have given this Saul half the dower he possesses ? And yet, thus much being given, doth it not enter my mind to go on, and give one thing more,— the best ?

“’Tis not what man does which exalts him, but what man would do !
See the king — I would help him, but cannot, the wishes fall through.

Could *I* wrestle to raise *him* from sorrow, grow poor to
 enrich,
 To fill up *his* life, starve my own out, I would,— knowing
 which,
 I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me
 now!
 Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—
 so wilt thou!

.

“O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
 Thou shalt love, and be loved by, forever; a Hand like
 this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!

See the Christ stand!”

Behold, the supreme offering of love, the sacrifice of everything dear, of everything which makes self in the worldly sense,—this shall save thee, this shall bless and redeem and divinize thee.

As this flood of spiritual light fills the innermost recesses of David's being, all trouble withers from earth, the morning dawns with a new tenderness, the gray of the hills takes on new intensity, all things in Nature feel and grow reverent before the new law. The flowers respond to it in their upturned faces; the heart of the cedar and the vine-bowers are moved by it;

“And the little brooks witnessing murmur, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices, ‘E’en so, it is so!’”

Every sublime life, deep in its experiences of joy and of sorrow, of struggle and of triumph, symbolizes the joys and the sorrows, the struggles and the triumphs, of our common humanity. Every great poem which records such a life is your history and mine, written large. The best have been cast down as we are cast down: we may be lifted up as the best are lifted up. Mental agony, spiritual doubt, the despair of faith in unseen and eternal things,—these are as old as man himself, and as new as this hour sacred to their consideration. How to get rid of them, how to summon in their stead that faith and hope and love which with the creative touch say, Let there be light,—this is the ever-present problem. It lurks within the experience which men have sometimes called being without God in the world, and in a way it is solved by that process which men have called experiencing religion. This is the common chord we strike when we get within the formal expressions of creeds and dogmas to that reality which, with however poor success, they all aim to voice.

There are times when great darkness settles over us, demoralizing our mood, until in no slight degree we become, as was Saul, spiritually drear and stark, blind and dumb. It may be due to mere physical experience, to weakness and disease, sapping our vitality, undermining our nerves with pain, and depriving us of that manhood's prime vigor which constitutes so large an element in the great joy of living. It may be due to mental obliquity, to ignorance, and all the ills which follow in its train, placing man at almost hopeless odds in the battle for existence, making him a poor calculator, at the mercy of forces he should be able to control. It may be due to the stunting or the blighting of the affections, to such ordering of circumstances as leaves a human heart without the supreme satisfactions of love, to disappointments, to betrayed confidences, to the parting with the near and the dear. It may be due to an undeveloped moral nature or a deteriorated moral nature, with no power to make nice distinctions between right and wrong, and with no keenness for those great moral issues which constitute a people's bread of life; and it may be due — it is due most of all — to the lack of spiritual perception, spiritual im-

pulse, spiritual longing, which alone have the almighty commission to consecrate the physical, to divinize the mental, to purify the affectional, and to soften the moral to the highest and most enduring ends. In the darkness Saul groans. In the darkness you and I and all men sit at times, in doubt and despair and agony. Evil of some kind in our individual experience crushes or startles or stuns us. Evil in the lives of our fellow-men all about us, seemingly omnipotent, enslaving men through their appetites, dropping them by the wayside in the competitions of work, losing them, and all that touches them most tenderly, in the rolling on of great systems, which seem, like great corporations, to have no souls,—evil of some kind stares us in the face. Every nation desolated by war speaks of it, every race stunted in its development speaks of it, poverty speaks of it, vice speaks of it, crime speaks of it. Individually and collectively, we are at the mercy of laws which ask neither of our desires nor of our deserts before they stab us to the heart. Darkness disturbed only by a groan, until the sweet singer comes, the good angel of life, and, untwining the lilies from his harp-strings, plays some tune which shall lift us to an altitude

worthy our destiny as men and women,— comes and appeals to the germ of light which, though it may sometimes only flicker, is never extinct in the human soul, and causes it in some way to brighten into a burning flame; plays the tunes which he has gathered on the hillsides where at nightfall the sheep come home, in the fields where the cricket sings, away off in space among the stars, in the deepest recesses of the mind and the loftiest exaltations of the heart of man.

He sings first to us of the service which everything good in a human being — and every human being does have some good in him — renders to truth and humanity. He recounts to us our boyhood's time, our boyhood of wonder and hope, the mission we received from our father, our mother's last message of faith, the companionship of brothers and friends, the response which has come to every true word we have uttered and every true thing we have done. He pictures to us how somewhere there is some human heart, perhaps many human hearts, full of thankfulness for us, to whom our living is an inspiration, and who on the tablets of their innermost beings and with the pen of their intensest moods will

keep our memories green after we have passed on. Service of truth and humanity, not necessarily great service, not necessarily extended service, such as leads a people to say King, but humble service, little faithful service, such as may be recognized only in reverent silence as it mounts the throne in some individual life,—this is the tune which may sometimes cause sunny thoughts and sunnier feelings to come flocking about us and within us, this is the strain which may sometimes drive the darkness away.

But, if something more is necessary, then the harpist sings of the devotion of love and its meaning,—the devotion of human love; of that sentiment which knows no race, no clime, no condition, which conquers the spirit of the counting-room and the street, which presides over the cradle, which tarries last at the grave, which puts heroism into the meanest life and a silken chain around the stoutest heart, which, believing the best of its object, idealizes it, and cherishes it not less because it has within it the power of suggesting the ideal. It makes life seem inexpressibly good to us, as it reminds us of the love which has watched over us and

guided us, and helped our tottering steps over what seemed discouraging obstacles on untried ways; makes life seem good to us, as it reminds us of the opportunities that have been ours to form the sacred relations of home and friendship, and to feel those inspirations which come from centring our desires, our ambitions, all our deepest longings, in some soul (summoned by ourselves, perchance, from out the unseen world) which is, with a gentleness no words can express, responsive to our own. To love and to be loved, to feel the warmth of close personal relations,—this it is which gives color and richness to life, this it is which arches the sky and makes the rose red, and this it is which can vivify us into life and cheer and beatitude, when gloom and despondency and doubt have demoralized our moods.

“Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine,—

And, oh, all my heart how it loved him!”

There is something in that sentiment which bears to our ears and to our hearts the summons of creative power, not less wonderful, not less beautiful, not less omnipotent, from lover to lover,

from parent to child, than from David looking up with reverent affection into the face of Saul. The creative power of love,—with what significance it thrills us with its music and attunes us to its divine harmonies!

But the angel of life has reserved for us a still tenderer and sublimer strain,—the supreme sacrifice of love.

“Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would.”

That is the spirit which signifies the highest form of human affection,—the willingness to subordinate one's self for the good of another, to lose one's own life to find it in the welfare of another. This it is which is symbolized in the Christs of history, and not less in every parent who really lives in his children, and in every human being who willingly, lovingly, unreservedly, makes the peace and happiness of a life more or less dependent upon him superior to his own. Strange, indeed, it is how we are coming to see that there has been a truth, however perverted, lurking within almost every church ceremony and every credal statement. We are saved

by the atoning power of the Christ, has been a favorite thought in Christian history. "He came, a ransom for many," have been the words on Christian lips. There are several things about such ideas that we do not like. We do not feel that men need to be saved, in the old sense, at all; and such salvation as is necessary for them we feel they must win in no small degree by their own efforts. And yet it is true that men are helped, purified, uplifted,—in a certain high sense, *saved*—by the consecration, by *every* consecration, of unselfish love.

"O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me
Thou shalt love, and be loved by, forever; a Hand like this
hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee!

See the Christ stand!"

Stand how? Not as an official personage, holding such authority as has been received from an external power, but as the ideal of human consecration to the highest service of humanity—a consecration which, because it loves so much, is willing to sacrifice so much. The world has not always known it; but it has never been long without such Christ-like influences, atoning for

its sins, lighting up its dark places, and transforming its night into day. Every life cut down in the process of growth, which has within it elements of beauty and of fragrance, becomes more beautiful and more fragrant as it passes to the Silent Land. Out of its death some good is born, some gentler nature comes. Where it has been, the pathway is strewn with flowers, and its memory becomes a touchstone of the highest virtue. The human heart beats in a higher strain to-day when it recalls the Spartan defence of Thermopylæ, and the message which heroism wrote there in letters of blood: "Stranger, tell it at Lacedæmon that we died in obedience to her sacred laws." There is more of true nobility in these United States because Robert G. Shaw surrendered the brightest prospects, and laid down his life with his colored troops in the common ditch at Fort Wagner. The blood of martyrs,—how often it has been the seed of the Church! The death of patriots,—how often it has been the people's redemption! Through personal sacrifice, through the devotion of love in its humblest and its divinest forms, love of the near and the dear, love of country, love of race, love of truth, justice, humanity, comes the at-onement.

The last testimony to the worship of the ideal is the sacrifice of self in its behalf. The preservation of this ideal, the cultivation of enthusiastic love for it,— call it by what name you will,— is the all-important thing. A true lover always idealizes the object of his love. A nation of men with anything of the poetic instinct always idealizes its heroes. Humanity always idealizes its saints. Garfield, the individual, is of far less consequence than Garfield, the ideal of suffering and sacrifice, which was so tenderly enshrined in the hearts of the people when the bells rang out his death upon the midnight air. Jesus, the man, is of far less consequence than Jesus, the ideal of suffering and sacrifice, which has been so sacredly cherished in the hearts of Christendom.

It is all these things which harp and voice unite in singing to us,— the service of truth and humanity, the devotion of love, the supreme sacrifice of love; it is all these things which bring us into harmony with the Universe, and make us one with the Divine Power in which—it is to-day, as it has always been, true — “we live and move and have our being”; it is all these things which cause us sooner or later to experience religion, and to live, wherever we may be, the spiritual life.

Spiritual awakening,—to some it comes so naturally and gently the process is hardly noticeable: to others it is a sudden transition, a sudden arousing to the beauties of the dawn. Would I do all in my power for the object of my love, I with all my limitations, I who could never have conceived of a tithe of the blessings with which that object has been endowed, and doubt that He alone will not continue to bless and save it “who yet alone can”! Has the divine spark which has been so clear and bright and warm in me exceeded the clearness, brightness, warmth, of the living Flame in which it had its origin, of whose nature it partakes, in whom is its destiny? No assumption could be more absurd. Human love, or rather divine love in the human, indicates divine love everywhere. Human devotion indicates divine devotion. Human care indicates infinite care. So I find God, so I “o’ertake God’s own speed in the one way of love.” And with this o’ertaking a heaven of new life is opened. I become aware as never before of the inner meanings of things; I rise superior to material considerations; I am at one with the universe, pitched to its key, in harmony with its rhythm. Troubles are still troubles, friction is

still friction, partings are still partings ; but space and time become less omnipotent, the spirit walks abroad, thought, love, aspiration, assume their proper functions, and are no longer subject to the old limitations. They bridge all chasms, they run along invisible wires to wheresoever in all the universe of life a soul unto another soul is drawn ; they lift us upward to wherever the ideal summons ; they soothe us with somewhat of the eternal serenity. All our mistakes, all our failures, become stepping-stones to the highest success ; all our trials become disciplines to the noblest achievements of character. Whatever comes to us, we feel the new law. O my soul, define him or not define him, God is ; Thought is ; Love is. What has been true and beautiful and good must continue to be true and beautiful and good ; ay, must ever grow and brighten in its truth and beauty and goodness.

“ And, oh, all my heart how it loved him ! ”

Through devotion and through sacrifice direct to heaven, here and everywhere,—in this conviction, in this ecstasy, we feel the new law. And as we feel it, conform ourselves to it, attune our moods to its leading, the whole atmosphere of

life becomes richer and more ethereal; the skies are bluer, the stars more lustrous, human affections more sacred, human longings more consecrating. In the serenity of a faith which has faced the facts and has conquered selfishness, we feel that this is a beautiful world; we become thankful for all its opportunities and reconciled to all its experiences. Because there is so much of love in it, so much of devotion in it, so much of divinizing sacrifice in it,—a beautiful world. That is the message which comes to us from the hearts we hold to our own; that is the message which comes to us from out the Silence. All Nature attests it this Sun-day. The spring landscape sings it in the tender touch of color mantling its cheeks and mingling with its brown and green and gray.

“And the little brooks witnessing murmur, persistent and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices,—“E’en so!
it is so!”

“The Star! the Star!”

“THE STAR! THE STAR!”

THAT is a wonderful description of the meeting of the three wise men which General Wallace has given us in his “Tale of the Christ.” Led of the Spirit, the Egyptian, the Hindu, and the Greek mount their camels, and go forth to find the redeemer of the world. We can see them in imagination, each pursuing his solitary way over the trackless desert, under the scorching sun by day, at night in the silent companionship of the stars, toward what is to prove the sacred place of meeting. The Egyptian arrives first, dismounts, looks with hand over his eyes to the distant horizon, exclaims confidently, “They will come, they will come,” and then pitches his tent, spreads his carpet, and prepares to receive his expected fellow-travellers. His every movement is intensely thoughtful and reverent, as of one who feels the sanctity of a holy mission. Again and again he looks, until at length a dark speck appears in the East, grows larger and

larger, and finally assumes the shape of a camel like his own, with a rider on the same sacred mission as himself. It is the Hindu. As the dusky son of India steps from his ship of the desert to the sand, the two reverently embrace. While they are yet talking together, the Greek appears; and the three proceed to the repast which the Egyptian has prepared. As they seat themselves facing each other, their heads instinctively bend forward, their hands cross upon their breasts, and, speaking together, they say aloud this simple grace,—

“Father of all,—God!—what we have here is of thee. Take our thanks and bless us, that we may continue to do thy will.”

Then each tells the others the story of his life, leading up to their moment of meeting. After the last has finished, they all rise, look at each other, and then by a common impulse join hands. “When we have found the Lord,” exclaims the Egyptian, “all will kneel to him in homage with us! And, when we part to go our separate ways, the world will have learned a new lesson,—that heaven may be won, not by the sword, not by human wisdom, but by faith, love, and good works.” And then, runs the story, “there is si-

lence, broken by sighs and sanctified with tears ; for the joy that fills them may not be stayed. . . Presently their hands fall apart, and they go out of the tent. The desert is still as the sky. The sun is sinking fast. A little while, and they strike their tent, mount their camels, and set out single file, led by the Egyptian. Their course is due west, into the chilly night. The animals swing forward in steady trot, keeping the line and the intervals so exactly that those following seem to tread in the tracks of the leader. The riders speak not once. By and by the moon comes up. And as the three tall white figures speed, with soundless tread, through the opalescent light, they appear like spectres flying from hateful shadows. Suddenly in the air before them, not farther up than a low hill-top, flares a lambent flame. As they look at it, the apparition contracts into a focus of dazzling lustre. Their hearts beat fast, their souls thrill, and they shout as with one voice, ‘The Star! the Star!’ ”

I suppose, friends, that we are all in search of a redeemer of the world,—not indeed in a manger, but in our own hearts and lives ; not in some far distant country, but on that little spot of earth where it is given us to stand, and to grow.

Dark the outlook, full of blind and almost hopeless struggle the days, until we learn who and what that redeemer is, and plainly discern the Star that shall guide us into his sacred presence. Riding our ambitions across the sands of time, sooner or later the vision comes to us that we are to find the divine in the human, and that the way to the divine thus enshrined will be revealed to us when in the silent watches of our own souls, or in the rare and high communion of kindred souls, the mood becomes one of humility and reverence and longing. Then we journey inward to ourselves, and listen by the way. Then we rise superior to mercenary considerations, and look aloft with firm and fearless heart.

Who *is* this redeemer of the world, whose cradle is my own life? What *is* the Star which shall guide me into the presence of my lord and saviour? The name of this redeemer is *Character*. No age and no land has a monopoly of *him*. God touches a soul, and he is born. God surrounds a soul with an atmosphere, and he lives and grows. He is not Judean, he is not Hindu, he is not Greek: he is human. His mission is not to one race and clime: it is to all races and all climes.

What *is* character? It is that indescribable somewhat which we sense in each other, but which we always find it difficult to define and express. Emerson speaks of it as that in a man which outruns his words and his acts. "We cannot find," he says, "the smallest part of the personal weight of Washington in his exploits, nor the authority of the name of Schiller in his books." That is to say there was something about these men greater than anything they said or did. We always feel that, in the presence of a strong, well-balanced, upright personage. How quickly we note it in the public speaker or singer, intuitively discovering whether the performance is mechanical or has a soul behind it! The finest relations in the world, both public and private, are interwoven of these imponderable threads. Did you ever know any one into whose presence you could not come without feeling his or her personal weight of harmonized strength, even though no word were spoken, or thing done? Is there the memory of a soul, or the actual presence of a soul anywhere in the universe for thee, that carries with it this composing and uplifting and consecrating influence which cannot be argued, but is to thee, and to all just

in proportion as they know it well, its own unanswerable demonstration? Well, that is Character. It is that about the human which makes it a part of the universal and eternal, moral and spiritual forces of the world, just as we recognize the foaming sea and the rock-ribbed mountains as parts of the material forces of the world. Think for a moment of any precious life within thine own heart circle, or belonging to the more public sphere of mankind, from which radiates out such an influence as I have described, and tell me if that life does not seem very close to the universe and all that therein is; tell me if it does not seem a part of the eternal harmonies, out of which, in common with the spheres, it has derived its own heavenly music and its own enchanting rhythm. Character is that which is superior to all outward circumstance. Character is strength, sweetness, the upward look, blending in the beauty of a personality at one with itself and at one with the universe. Character is God in humanity. This is the redeemer for which, consciously or unconsciously, we all wait, which we all need, which we all set out to find.

“Not farther off, but farther in,—
Such is the nature of thy quest;

They heaven find who heaven win,
The one true Christ is in thy breast."

But how shall we come into his presence, say, rather, how shall we make our own beings so inviting to him that he will gladly come and dwell with us? "The Star! the Star!" what is that? Nothing more nor less than an all-controlling, ennobling purpose in life; a steady, serene pursuit of the better; the worship of an ideal. All life implies movement, all exaltation of life implies upward movement. Lowell, in his description of the opening days of summer, sings:—

"Joy comes, grief goes, we know not how;
Everything is happy now,
Everything is upward striving.
'Tis as easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green, or for skies to be blue,
'Tis the natural way of living."

In the perpetual summer of a worthy life, upward striving is always the natural way of living. Life, indeed, becomes a trackless desert, out of whose disappointments and struggles and misunderstandings and sorrows there seems no way, when we lose sight of our guiding star, and can no longer follow its dear leading.

I can imagine two young men on the threshold of active life, preparing to meet the exigencies which the days, the months, and the years shall bring. "All before them lies the way," — not a sharply defined road from whose well-worn path there is no chance of turning, but open fields and mighty forests and flowing rivers to be traversed and felled and forded by the native forces and the trained skill which they shall bring to the task. Gayly, proudly, thoughtlessly, one of them steps forward with that kind of alertness which he thinks will enable him to get the greatest amount of happiness, the greatest amount of honor, the greatest amount of financial return, out of the fleeting moments as they pass. He looks about him on the level where he stands: he has not learned to look up, or to look in. As time wears on, some degree of success, as the world counts success, comes to him. He has given all his efforts to making money, and he has made some; he has given all his efforts to obtaining political distinction and office, and political distinction and office have brought him their satisfactions. He has learned to measure his career in the world, with the dollars in his treasury or with the votes of his fellow-citizens. But by

and by disaster comes to him,—his investments prove insecure, he loses his fortune. By and by, in the ups and downs of politics, he is laid aside and forgotten, and ceases to be a factor in the management of the community, the State, or the nation. Everything upon which he has learned to depend has left him. He is having his first lesson in the great truth that the things which are seen are temporal; and, unfortunately, he has yet no conception of the companion truth, that the things which are *not* seen are eternal. He looks about him: there is the open field, there the forest, there the river, there the sands of the desert; but there are no guide-boards, no mile-stones, and he has not learned to look up, and to see the Star. What is it all for? For the first time in his life he asks himself that question, and seeks in vain a satisfactory answer. He has not found his redeemer, and as yet does not know how to go to work to find him. Do you not think there are a great many men in the world with just about such careers as I have described? If it were not so, I believe the question, “Is life worth living?” would never have been asked.

But, now, how about the other young man? He is so constructed, his mood is such, that the

query, "What is it all for?" comes to him on the threshold of his active participation in human affairs. He sees that work is a means, not an end; that wealth is a means, not an end; that office is a means, not an end; that life itself is a means and an opportunity, not an end. He questions, he thinks; and out of it all he comes to have a sober, serious purpose. Out of this purpose — not all at once perhaps, but in the course of time — evolves a distinct recognition that he is here in this world to make the most possible of himself and to help others to make the most possible of themselves. And so he devotes himself to ennobling studies, forms high companionships, paints for himself in the world of the imagination uplifting aims. His mind goes out in new and broadening channels; his heart responds in sympathy to human suffering, and is stirred by the sense of justice in the presence of human wrongs; his soul, though he may hardly know the name, still less be able to define the reality, aspires constantly toward the better. If he should give utterance to the general spirit which pervades his being, tones his mood, and leads him on, it would be in some such words as were the natural expression of a sweet, sunshiny,

serious young life: “We must do what we can, and be as much for other people as we can, to find happiness, and ever reach upward to the ideal.” Time wears on, and he enters business to be recognized as the honest and upright merchant, or he becomes a mechanic who leaves no flaw in his work, or he takes up the profession of the law to plead for justice and equity, or he practises medicine to promote health and get at the root causes of disease, or he preaches in the pulpit, that he may lead himself and all men to a sense of the spiritual life. Whatever he does, whatever he says, he impresses you as one who has seen the lambent flame, and who rides steadily and persistently and safely forward under the guidance of the Star. His plans may miscarry, the world’s wealth may not flow into his coffers, disappointments may meet him, sorrow may seem at times to crush him, he may be driven at last in many of his deepest experiences into the solitude of his own soul; but he lifts his eye, and there is the Star, and he moves on, and on again, to a new realization of the redeeming power which makes him one with the invisible and the eternal. Have we ever known, any of us, such a career as this? Whether in private or in public life, such

a one is a pledge of the divinity in humanity, and a hint that somehow, in ways we cannot understand, "God's greatness flows around our incompleteness, round our restlessness his rest."

The Star! the Star! that shall guide us to where the redeemer lies; persistent search for the better, the worship of the ideal which shall lead us to the highest realizations of character,—oh, how vital these are in the individual and the collective life of humanity! I see a girl, giddy, superficial, frivolous, passing from one sensation to another, as if such were the bread of life. She drifts unthinkingly into womanhood, perchance wifehood and motherhood, without ever feeling, apparently, "that one increasing purpose which through the ages runs." She grows old with a mind full of doubts and a heart full of misgivings, and a mood over all which speaks of a sort of negative and, on the whole, rather hopeless resignation. I see another girl whose nature has somehow been keyed to another and a higher strain. Bright she may be, entertaining she may be, but always in a way which indicates weight of character underlying the lightest mood. Wisdom has whispered in her ear, saying, Seek knowledge, and she seeks it; love has whispered

to her heart, saying, Be sweet, kind, gentle to others, and she is so. Soul life has asserted itself within her, saying, Behold the inner meanings of things: let every day find thy real self twenty-four hours' march nearer to all those attainments which moth and rust cannot corrupt, and which thieves breaking through cannot carry away. And every day finds her just so. Thus she makes for herself an infinitely sacred career. The pecuniary returns may come or not come, wifehood and motherhood even may come or not come: the highest, the noblest, the purest womanhood *has* come; and wherever men touch that, come into the presence of that, behold that from afar, they shall tread more reverently, “thinking they walk in hallowed cathedrals.”

Good friend, can you see your Star? You who are a merchant, standing behind your counter, sitting at your desk, have you an ideal which means absolute honesty in all your dealings, is every article you sell for pure absolutely pure, do your measurements hold out, is your word as good as your bond? Mechanic in your workshop, do you make every joint and mould every casting and put on every coat of paint as if the eyes of mankind were upon you? Teacher in

the school-room, are you in command of yourself, are you calling out the best in the children by first letting the highest thought and the noblest purpose call out the best in you? Doctor by the bedside, are you studying health more than disease, are you more anxious to teach people how to *keep* well than how to *get* well? Attorney in the office or in the court-room, is there less of quarrel and more of harmony in the world because of thee? Minister, at the desk and on the street, is there less of sectarianism and more of faith, less of selfishness and more of love, less of the downward and more of the upward look; because of thee? Fathers and mothers, is the world better, is there more of sweetness in it, more of trust in it, more of love in it, because of thy fatherhood and motherhood? Office-holder, little or great, is thy ward better off, thy city, thy State, thy country, better off, because thou art a holder of office?

Good friends all, whatever your vocations, is the work in which you are engaged part and parcel of that which helps humanity forward from good to better, and from better thence again to better, in infinite progression? Do you see the Star, or do clouds of self-interest and

passion and material prosperity obscure it? These are searching questions, if we press them home each one for himself. Few people, indeed, there are who do not at times grovel in the dust. Few movements there are which do not at times lower their standard. Often, indeed, one finds himself surrounded by the wrecks of his ambitions, his aims, his ideals. Often, indeed, it requires all he can command of philosophy and faith to keep his eyes fixed upon the Star ; but he must do that, else he does not find his redeemer, and, not finding his redeemer, he is, in a sense of which the theologians never dreamed, without God in the world. The Star ! the Star ! does it summon us all to precisely the same tasks? By no means. Its call is to be and to do the best that is in you ; to meet the duty which lies nearest, in that exaltation of spirit which makes the action fine. It may be the common affairs of life with which you are dealing,—the cares of housekeeping, the anxieties of trade, the drudgery of mere routine work. Then your Star summons you to be faithful in these, to see that *they* do not master *you*, but that *you* master *them*.

It may be that you are so constructed as to be especially sensitive, easily hurt by misunder-

standings, easily made suspicious by some thoughtless word or some inconsiderate act. Then your ideal summons you, in the depths of your own sacred experiences, to keep sweet, to look for the best in motive always, to believe in the goodness which may dwell in the smallest and in the largest thing until, beyond all question, it is proven not to be there. Are you facing inexpressible and ever-growing sorrow? Is separation from the loved of thy heart, in the body or out of the body, what has come to thee? Then from the distance, perchance from out the deep mysteries of the unseen, thy Star throws around thee a sweet influence, scarcely articulated in words, to keep thee strong to meet worthily the heaviest trials, to bear worthily the heaviest burdens, and to become day by day, in thy yearning solitude, a better man.

What we most need to make us whole or holy, to make our lives a symphony,—that it is to which our Star summons us. In the sacred seclusion of our own individuality we look up to it, we find its deepest significance, and we follow its leading to new attainments of noble character.

“All that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can throw,
 Like the angled spar
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
 My star that dartles the red and the blue!
 Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled;
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
 What matter to me if their star is a world?
 Mine has opened its soul to me: therefore, I love it.”

Tread lightly, tread respectfully, tread reverently, when you enter the sanctifying presence of a soul bowed in worship before its Star.

Nor let us forget that men collectively need to have their Star, too. What a difference between a friendship based on mercenary considerations and one in which two souls look up to find each other! What a difference between a reform movement in which everybody is asserting himself and one in which everybody is enthusiastically devoted to an inspiring cause! What a difference between a political party which is looking for the spoils and one which is serving divine principles! What a difference between a

church which in matters of belief, or in matters of form and ceremony, thanks God it is not as other men are, and one which in essential spirit and purpose senses the good in all men, and strives to lift it higher toward the skies!

Not now alone the three wise men of the East moving, spectre-like, upon their camels over the sands of the desert, but all the wisdom and all the heart and all the conscience of humanity are out in search of their redeemer. Along the paths of life's common duties and its great tasks come youth and maidenhood, with hopeful inquiring gaze, feeling the onward propulsion; come mature manhood and womanhood, strong to do and to dare; comes age, crowned with serenity and peace; come eager hearts; come loving hearts; come sorrowing hearts; comes every aspiring thought, pure feeling, uplifting impulse of mankind. All strain their eyes, as they move forward in expectation and trust; and as the lambent flame appears before them and contracts into a focus of dazzling lustre, their souls thrill, and they shout aloud with thankful voices, The Star! the Star!

Dear friends, are you and I in the glad procession, can our eyes see the vision and our

voices join the acclaim? Then not in Judea, and in a manger, but wherever we are, and in our own souls, shall we each one of us be able to say, “I know that my redeemer liveth”; then shall we, each one of us, bring to him, not “the gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh,” but the more precious offering of our undying loyalty and love.

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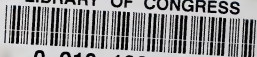
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